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AUTHOR Ritter, Debora A.; Brown, Martha L.
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ABSTRACT

A model for constructing a student leadership development program at the college level is discussed, and suggestions for refining an existing leadership program are offered. Questions that should be discussed to clarify the focus of the program are identified, including how leadership is defined, how leadership development is part of career preparation, and how the program fits into the mission statement of a division or college. It is important to insure that assessment instruments measure what is considered important to the program. The assessment tool can measure the current leadership program against the program objectives, and will likely identify both strong and weak areas. Added to the results of analyzing campus conditions, assessment results should provide a good direction for future program development. Evaluation is an essential part of the program development and assessment process. When used in a cyclical format, this model provides logical guidelines for the development and maintenance of a quality program to teach students leadership skills. (SW)

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Abstract

Leadership development is a relatively new buzzword in higher education. Although the number and variety of programs is increasing rapidly, research concerning their effectiveness is seldom seen. In developing leadership programs, the obstacles of diminishing resources and lack of understanding of the importance of these programs can be difficult to overcome. In addition, it is important to tailor programs for the stages of leadership that students pass through.

This article will introduce a general model for constructing a comprehensive leadership development program for any specific institution. Suggestions will also be given for refining an existing leadership program. When used in a cyclical format, this model provides logical guidelines for the development and maintenance of a quality program to teach students leadership skills.

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Debora A. Ritter
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208

Martha L. Brown
Creighton University
Omaha, NE 68132

At the 1986 American College Personnel Association conference for higher education professionals, there were no less than 12 programs that specifically addressed the topic of student leadership development; many others touched on related leadership issues. Leadership development is an area that has become a key focus for business and politics, and is finally coming of age in higher education. An increasingly larger number of colleges and universities have instituted some form of leadership program, and some are quite extensive. Many schools now have staff positions that exist primarily to coordinate leadership development programs; a trend that has developed only within the last ten years. The majority of other schools have someone with leadership responsibilities in their job description.

The variety of leadership programming is as broad as the different types of institutions where it takes place. Because so much is being done, difficulties can arise when given the responsibility to create or modify a program. With so many options available, what process can be used to select and implement the most effective programs? What components should be included to result in a truly comprehensive program? What specific needs exist at an institution and what delivery modes will best fit those needs?

By using the step-by-step process described below, it is possible to create or refine an excellent leadership program tailor-made for a specific institution. Each leadership program is and should be different, but the process used in developing and evaluating programs should be similar. The development process consists of 5 phases:

1. Analysis of Assumptions
2. Analysis of Institutional Environment
3. Analysis of Existing Programs
4. Development and Implementation of new Components
5. Evaluation

1. Analysis of Assumptions

Most higher education professionals would agree that offering programs specifically designed to foster the growth of leadership skills in students is an essential part of their college experience. However, these same colleagues may hold greatly differing beliefs about how that might best be accomplished. It

is essential that questions such as the following be discussed and some agreement or understanding reached by those responsible for administering a leadership program.

1. How do you define leadership?

2. How do you believe someone becomes a better leader? How do you know when learning has taken place?

3. How is leadership development a part of career preparation?

4. How does your program fit into your Institutional or Divisional Mission Statement or goals?

5. Who is your audience? Who do you intend to serve?

6. What are your resources on and off campus?

7. What mandates do you have from internal/external sources?

8. Who can/will you collaborate with?

9. What components of leadership programs do you believe are the most important?

10. What delivery methods are most effective on your campus?

11. What outcomes are you looking for? How will you know when you have achieved them?

Answering these questions should result in a clarity of focus concerning the purpose of the program.

2. Analysis of Institutional Environment

As is true of every program that is part of an academic institution, the leadership program will not exist independently. It will be affected by many variables that may or may not be unique to the campus. Analysis of the conditions that may support or hinder leadership development efforts is crucial to the success of the program.

An assessment form developed by Mabey is exceptionally thorough and well suited for this purpose.

3. Analysis of Existing Programs

In order to assess the quality and quantity of already existing programs, it is necessary to use some type of assessment tool. Some excellent instruments already exist for this purpose, or an original instrument might be created to fit specific campus

needs. The important consideration here is to be sure that the assessment instrument reflects previously explored assumptions about leadership. That is, the measurement tool must measure what is considered to be important in order to provide useful information. Several models are included here as examples:

(INSERT TABLE 1 HERE)

4. Development and Implementation of New Components

Through the use of an assessment tool, it is now possible to identify and measure what is currently offered on the campus against what constitutes a comprehensive leadership program, as defined by completing Step 1. Both strong and weak areas will most likely be identified. Adding this information to the results of the analysis of campus conditions should provide a good general direction for future program development. Judging from an informal review of leadership programs at different schools, the possibilities for new program components are unlimited. Here are some examples of successful programs:

Leadership classes for credit or non-credit
Co-curricular Transcripts
Group Workshops
Speaker's Bureau
Off-campus Conferences
Emerging Leader Workshops/Retreats
Mentoring Programs
Paraprofessional Training/Consulting
Academic classes in Group Dynamics, Public Speaking, Management, etc.
Resource Centers
Individual Leadership Assessments
Student Leader Advisory Boards
Leadership Newsletters
Senior "Debriefing" Sessions
Leadership for Women, Minorities, and other special populations
"Shadow" Programs with Community Leaders

5. Evaluation

As with any program assessment or development, evaluation is an essential part of the process. Evaluation should be ongoing, possibly with the assistance of a Task Force or Advisory Committee. There are many ways to collect evaluative data, and more than one method should be used. Qualitative results are just as important as quantitative: ask "To what extent did learning take place?" as well as "How many people attended?" The use of follow-up surveys or tracking of students involved in a leadership activity can also elicit useful information. To guide evaluation efforts, refer back to the answer to the question "What outcomes are you looking for?"

The entire process described here should ideally be repeated several times each year. Regularly analyzing existing beliefs about leadership and the effectiveness of leadership programs will help to maintain high quality programs and to make changes as appropriate to keep in step with the college population.

Table 1

Ritter & Brown
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Models for Analyzing Existing Programs

(General ← - - - - - - - - - → Specific)

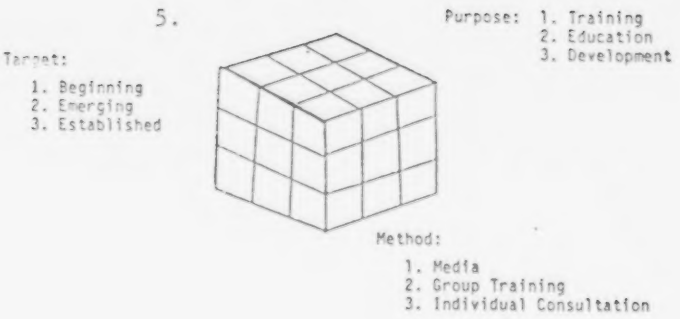
1. Opportunity
   Support
   Reward
(D. Blocker, 1978)

2. Interpersonal Skills
   Knowledge
   Management Skills
(Lynch & Joseph, 1983)

3. Credit Courses
   Experiential Opportunities
   Advising/Mentoring
   Workshops/Seminars
(M. Brown, 1986)

4. Topic
   Population
   # People
   Teaching Method
   Time of Year
   Frequency
   Resources
(D. Ritter, 1985)

5.



(D. Ritter, 1985)

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